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Getting Started With E-mail Archiving for Exchange

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BIO

Brien Posey is a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer and a technical author, who has produced thousands of articles, tips, and white papers since 1995. Posey is a four-time recipient of Microsoft's "Most Valuable Professional" Award for his work with Windows Server, Internet Information Server, and Exchange Server. He has served as CIO for a nationwide chain of hospitals and healthcare facilities, and was once a network administrator for Fort Knox. His personal website is www.brienposey.com.

This *IT Briefing* is based on a Sherpa/TechTarget Webcast, "Getting Started With E-mail Archiving for Exchange."

This TechTarget *IT Briefing* covers the following topics:

About Sherpa Software

Sherpa Software provides extensive archiving, email management, PST file administration, content searching, and policy enforcement capabilities to companies addressing issues relating to compliance, storage management, and e-discovery. Sherpa's solutions offer flexible architectures and are easy to use and install. Products include: Archive Attender® (mailbox, PST file & public folder archiving), Mail Attender® (mailbox, PST file & public folder management), and Discovery Attender® (electronic search & discovery).

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Getting Started With E-mail Archiving for Exchange

Introduction

This document discusses the reasons e-mail archiving is necessary, the benefits of archiving messages, the different options available for archiving, and how administrators can determine which option is best for a given company.

Why Is Archiving Necessary?

Email Archiving has become a key issue for many corporate decision makers. A driving factor for this is that many industries are impacted by federal regulations which require that email communications are archived and preserved for a statutory period of time. E-mail archiving regulations primarily pertain to publicly traded companies, financial institutions, healthcare facilities, and government agencies.

Although compliance with federal regulations is usually a key motive behind e-mail retention, many companies choose to retain and archive emails solely for legal purposes. Due to the litigious environment in which many companies exist, old e-mail may be useful in lawsuits and can be subpoenaed in conjunction with criminal or civil charges. E-mail archives can work as a defense, but they can also become liabilities and increase a company's risk profile if they expose unnecessary information or contain evidence of illegalities.

While company management may not feel that the legal benefits from e-mail archiving can justify the associated costs, archiving has other, more immediate practical benefits.

Archiving helps to eliminate mailbox quota issues. Administrators often have to implement mailbox quotas as a way to prevent the mail server from running out of disk space. Although users frequently have important messages that they need to keep in their mailboxes, they may eventually need to delete them in order to stay within the quota limit. The same thing happens with mailbox retention limits as well. Some administrators set up retention limits that automatically delete old messages. However, if users are under the impression that their old messages are safely stored in their inboxes, they may have an unpleasant surprise if a message is deleted when its retention period runs out.

Some users get around these problems by creating PST files and moving the messages they want to keep, into those PST files. While this may remedy user's quota and retention issues in the short-term, PST files often create other long-term problems. For instance, if the PST file is stored locally on the user's hard drive and it is not being backed up, a hard-disk failure on the user's workstation could easily result in data loss. Or, administrators may reformat a hard drive in an effort to fix a Windows problem and be completely unaware that a user was storing data on it. There are also security implications associated with storing these types of PST files locally.

Some users may store their PST files on network shares, which may raise other problems. Microsoft recommends not storing PST files on network shares because certain network conditions can result in corrupting them. Also, PST files consume disk space on the network share. Similar to mailboxes, file servers can also have disk quotas enabled which can have negative implications for PST users if the server reaches its quota limit. In addition, problems in some versions of Outlook result in PST file corruption when the PST file size exceeds 2 GB. There are a number of other problems associated with PST files on a network share which are not within the scope of this document.

Overall, serious administrative problems are associated with managing disk quotas, mailbox quotas and PST files. A good archiving solution can eliminate many of these potential problems.

Archiving Solution Options

Three primary archiving options for an Exchange Server are:

- Exchange Server's native features
- Third-party software
- Archival service subscription

Each of these methods have advantages and disadvantages, as shown in the following sections.

Native Exchange Server Features

Exchange Server does not have much native archiving capability, but some features can be used for archiving. The primary built-in archiving mechanism in Exchange is journaling. In Exchange Server 2007, transport rules can enhance the journaling ability to assist in the archiving process.

The main advantages to using the built-in features are:

- They are fully supported by Microsoft.
- They are essentially free to implement.

A company may have to buy another server on which to store their archives, but they would not have to invest in expensive third-party software. The company will also not encounter situations in which a third-party vendor blames Microsoft for a problem while Microsoft blames the vendor.

The disadvantages of using Exchange Server's built-in archiving capabilities, however, often outweigh the advantages. Exchange Server has very limited archiving capabilities, so it can be difficult to implement them effectively. Even if an administrator can make the archiving work to meet the company's requirements, retrieving individual messages from the archives can be complex and difficult. When a company factors in the need to buy another Exchange Server to handle the archived data, then a third-party archival product or subscription to an archival service may be better options.

Third-Party Software

One great advantage of third-party software is the wide variety of archival products available. In general, the capabilities of these products go far beyond the built-in options for Exchange. With so many products to choose from, a company can pick the product with the features that best meet its needs.

Third-party software also has a few disadvantages. A major one is the price. Prices can vary widely, but any enterprise-class software will not be inexpensive. A company must evaluate the total cost of ownership rather than just the initial purchase price. Many third-party archival products require the purchase of additional licenses as mailboxes are added. A company may also have to purchase a support agreement, which can cost thousands of dollars each year. Not all companies offering Exchange archival software has these requirements; these are simply some issues an organization may encounter with some third-party products. However, almost every third-party archival product will require an investment in an additional server and storage hardware. Another disadvantage of third-party archival software is a tendency to require a very steep learning curve, a common problem of enterprise-class software. Some third-party vendors offer training classes, which does reduce the learning curve.

Archival Service Subscription

For some companies, subscribing to an archival service is the best option. An archival service typically has the lowest initial start-up cost, since a company does not have to invest in any extra hardware or software. The company is virtually renting space on the vendor's infrastructure. In addition, most archival services perform daily maintenance and nightly backups.

Some companies opt for an archival service because of liability concerns: if the company is legally required to maintain e-mail archives, they are liable if they fail to meet these requirements. However, if the archiving company does not meet the legal and contractual requirements, the failure may be the vendor's fault. Most companies require a service contract from their archival vendors confirming that the archival service complies with all rules and regulations to which the company is subject.

Other advantages include ease of initial startup and a reduction of concern about hardware and storage issues.

Unfortunately, using an archiving service also has disadvantages. One of the disadvantages is price. While an archival service typically offers the lowest start-up price, the long-term costs are usually much higher than maintaining a solution in-house. Archiving in-house requires a new server and maybe some archival software, but once these are paid for, the only long-term cost is administrative overhead.

With an archival service, a company continues to pay hosting fees month after month, long after the archival software and server would have been paid for. In addition, many of the service companies offer one-year contracts. When that contract runs out, the

renewal price is usually higher than the previous year. Costs can also rise with increased numbers of mailboxes and the consumption of more disk space within the archives. Some archival companies may also charge a fine for exceeding the allotted disk space.

Indirect costs may also be associated with using an archival service. For example, because the service is hosted remotely, all the messages that are being archived must be sent across the Internet, which increases Internet bandwidth consumption. Depending on the pricing structure of a company's ISP, this may or may not increase the cost. The company may also need to upgrade to a faster Internet connection to handle the additional amount of traffic generated by the archival process.

Additionally, some unscrupulous hosting companies exist. If a company is considering an archival service, the decision-makers must look into the vendor's reputation, carefully review the service contract, and ask certain important questions that are discussed later in this document.

Choosing an Archiving Solution

Analyzing each method's strengths and weaknesses alone is not sufficient. A company also needs to consider a number of practical issues.

Ongoing Costs

Regardless of whether a company archives messages in-house or outsources it, there will be ongoing costs. It is important to be aware of these costs when making a decision regarding the method of archiving.

If the archiving is taking place in-house, the ongoing costs will be related to:

- Adding disk space over time
- Software maintenance contracts
- Administrative and staffing costs
- Hardware repairs and upgrades

If a company outsources its message archiving, some ongoing costs may include:

- Subscription fees and fee increases over time
- Cost of archiving additional mailboxes as the organization grows
- Cost of restoring data if the vendor charges for this service
- Fines for exceeding disk-space allocation

Features

Depending on its needs, each company will require certain features, regardless of the type of message-archiving solution selected. Not all the following features apply to all companies and some companies may need others.

Flexible Search Engine

Archives are much less useful if a company cannot locate and extract specific messages from within the archive. The archive will quickly become too large for manual searches. So any archive solution requires a good search engine.

Adjustable Retention Period

No company wants to be locked into a factory-default retention period or into retaining every message. Companies should be able to control the retention period and put a hold on the retention period. If certain messages are subpoenaed, they must not be automatically deleted simply because the retention period has expired.

Tamper-Resistant Security

Tamper-resistant security is required if a company is archiving messages in compliance with federal regulations. Most federal regulations related to message archiving require the archives to be tamper-resistant.

Message Exporting

A company should be able to export a subset of messages, whether for normal retrieval or in response to a subpoena. The search engine should locate the messages, but the company still needs to export them in a format acceptable to or required by the court. A good message archiving solution allows the messages to be exported into a PST file.

Automated Lifecycle Management

When the message retention period expires, administrators do not want to have to manually delete the messages. The software needs to do that automatically.

Compression

Compression is very important. If each employee at a given company generates 1 GB or 2 GB of archived e-mails per year, 100 users could easily generate 100 GB of archived mail in a year. Over time, the archive will continue to grow, and as more mailboxes are added. Compression allows a company to make the most efficient use of its archive storage space.

Also, one major reason for the size of many e-mail archives is message attachments. Currently, it is not unusual for a message attachment to be 3 to 5 MB in size. Applications have produced larger and larger document file sizes over time and this trend is likely continue in the future adding to the growth of the archives. So compression of the archived data will become even more important.

Good Interface

Some software is overly complex. A good archiving product should be intuitive and the interface should allow for maximum efficiency. Most of the companies that make message-archiving products allow companies to test-drive their products before making a purchasing decision. Take advantage of this opportunity.

Some archival products on the market offer a separate interface designed specifically for the end users. It allows users to browse their own archived messages and retrieve copies of messages that were accidentally deleted.

How Does the Archival Process Affect Day-to-Day Operation?

Another point for a company to consider is how the archival process will affect its day-to-day operations. Some questions to consider include:

- What ongoing maintenance will be required?
- Is the software going to run itself or is it going to turn into an administrative burden?
- What is the recommended method for backing up the archives?
- Will the process interfere with the normal Exchange Server backup?
- Can patches be applied to Windows, Exchange, or the archive software without affecting the archival process?
- Will the archiving method work with new versions of Windows and Exchange? What about with new service packs?

Other Questions to Consider

A company may want to ask some additional questions to be sure that the proposed archival solution will be right:

- How long will the implementation take? Will it take a couple of hours, as do most of the outsourced archiving services? Will it take days or even weeks to implement?
- Once the software is running, will it migrate the existing mail or only archive new messages?
- If the software archives existing mail, how long will that take?
- Will Exchange Server's performance be notably impacted during the initial archiving process?
- What happens if the archival service fails?
- What safeguards are in place to protect against message loss?

Archiving Made Easy With Archive Attender®

Regulatory restrictions, legal audits, and increasing email storage limitations have required companies to take an alternative approach to managing their email systems by implementing an archiving strategy. However, deciding how, what, when and where to archive is the difficult and arduous task that many organizations face.

Defining the strategy is the hard part—choosing the right solution is easy. Sherpa Software's Archive Attender for Exchange will guide and help you sort through the mountains of email communications you have and move your corporate knowledge to a secure archive location.

Archive Attender is an administrator-driven solution designed to selectively move or copy messages from Exchange mailboxes, the Journal mailbox, PST files and public folders to any storage device visible to the application via the network. Archive Attender assists companies with storage and compliance requirements while offering a flexible archiving architecture, easy-to-use interface (see Figure 1), and a favorable

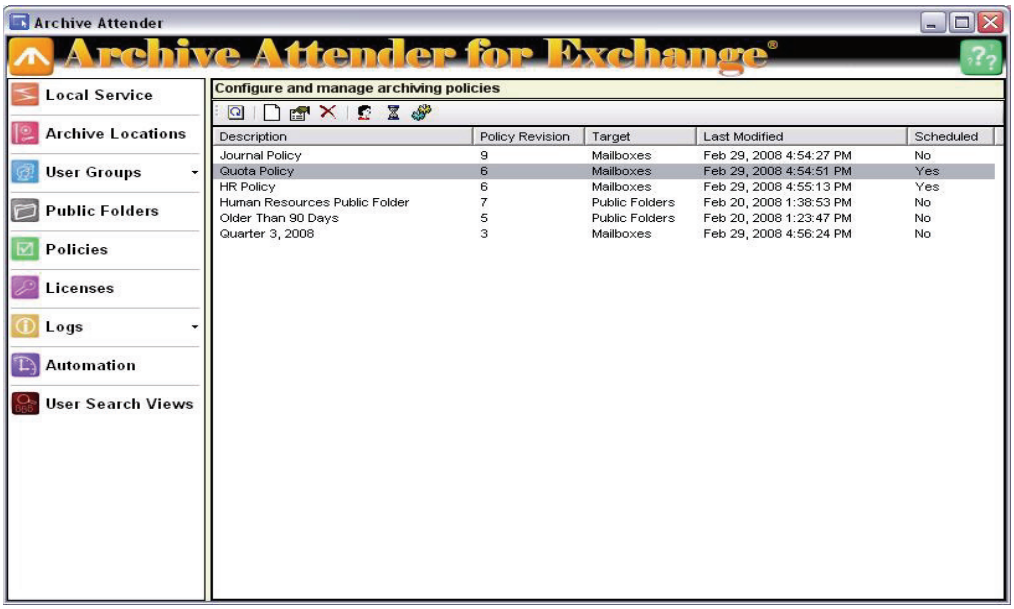

Figure 1 Archive Attender's Easy-to-Use Interface

pricing model that is efficiently priced for any size organization.

Address Legal and Regulatory Compliance Requirements

The advent of regulations such as Sarbanes-Oxley, HIPAA and the new amendments to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedures have forced companies to know more about the information stored in their systems than ever before. In order to comply with these rules and requirements, companies need to have an understanding of the breadth and depth of their information stores and establish preservation policies, archive locations, search methods and deletion procedures to properly mange the lifecycle of information in the eyes of the government and courts.

By centralizing data and archiving information off of susceptible mail servers with Archive Attender, organizations can secure corporate data, quickly search and locate specific content within the archive, have a record of all important business communications, be prepared in the event of litigation and manage the lifecycle of specific data.

Archive Attender provides the ability to enforce very granular archiving policies. Whether you want to move information into the archive by user, department or for the company at large, you can identify certain qualifiers such as keywords, subject, sender, size, type and more to determine which messages should be secured and for whom. Once information is archived, it can be optionally indexed to provide for quicker searching. Should an electronic discovery request be issued, Archive Attender can query the individual indexes to retrieve information quickly and meet the often stringent deadlines imposed by the courts.

When Exchange journaling is enabled, Archive Attender can archive all, or a subset of the messages, from the Journal mailbox in their native format, and compress them to optimize storage. This provides organizations addressing regulatory compliance requirements an automated mechanism to ensure that an original copy of each incoming and outgoing message is captured and stored. These messages may also be indexed and, therefore, can be easily searched and recovered.

Once information is moved to a secure archive location, legal holds can be applied and audit trails of all activity within the archive can be maintained. Manager search views may also be generated to allow legal teams and compliance officers to conduct ongoing searches across the archives for a defined group of users. As soon as compliance and legal obligations are fulfilled, retentions that mange the lifecycle of information can be enforced to purge data after its "useful" life.

Manage Storage Limitations

Burdening servers with the increasing amounts of email messages that are sent, received and saved drains the overall effectiveness of IT. Server performance slows, back-up times become lengthy and delivery of emails can be hindered. Dealing with inflated email and attachment loads on the servers can also deplete administrators' resources. By automatically archiving email messages and attachments to a separate data store with Archive Attender, organizations can alleviate excessive server load, reduce administrator workloads, and consistently maintain strong server performance levels.

Archive Attender helps reclaim valuable mail sever space by automatically archiving data from Exchange mailboxes including messages, journal entries, calendar entries, tasks, contacts, sticky notes, and other items, as well as data from the Journal mailbox, PST files and public folders, to less expensive storage devices. With flexible archiving polices specifically created to address storage concerns, administrators can flag messages for inclusion in the archive based on the age, subject, sender, size, keywords, type and more.

Archive Attender also offers the ability to leverage Exchange's quota settings when targeting information for the archives. You can use Archive Attender's innovative quota targets to leverage Exchange's quota settings or define customized quota limits within Archive Attender policies to archive messages from a mailbox (see Figure 2). By using a quota target, you can define at what percentage of the quota message archiving should begin, as well as define when archiving should cease based on an optimum usage percentage of the quota. Once these targets are defined, a weighted scale can be applied that determines which messages should be archived first from the mailbox—oldest or largest, or a weighted combination of the two.

When information has reached the end of its lifecycle, archive cleanup can be scheduled to purge unnecessary information and continually recycle storage space.

Eliminate PST Files

As mentioned earlier in this report, PST files are often created by users as a way to get around quota settings and storage limitations within their mailboxes. The decentralized nature of these files, due to their

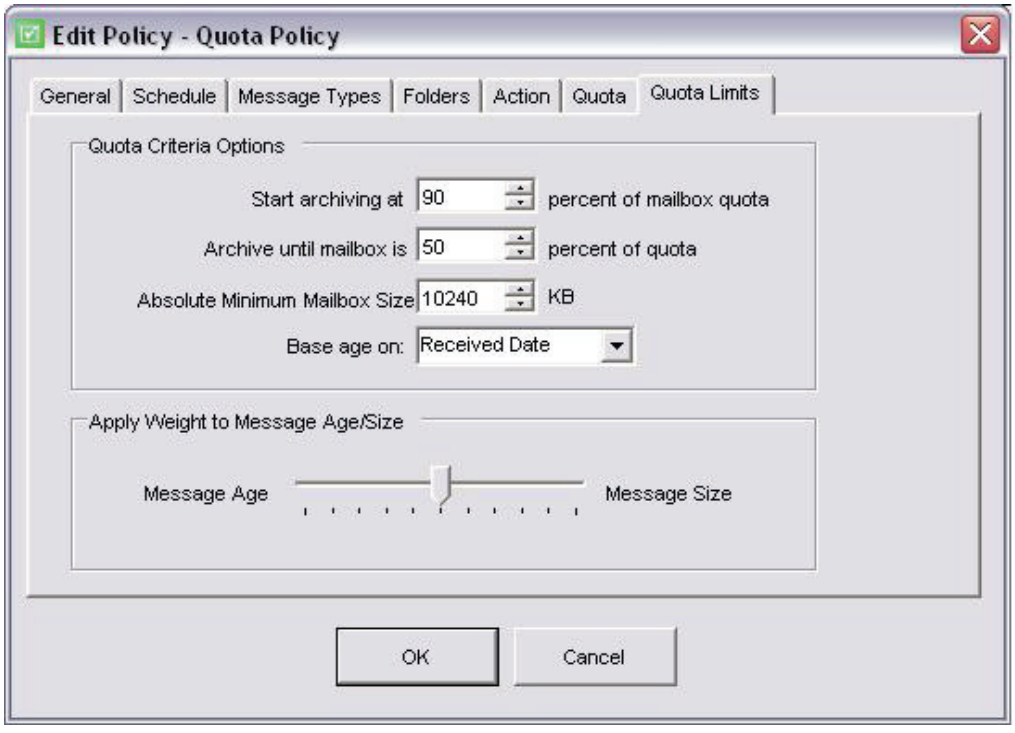

Figure 2 Targeting Messages Based on Quota Settings and Utilizing Archive Attender's Weighted Scale

proliferation throughout the enterprise, often make the task of accessing and managing these information stores extremely problematic for any administrator. Adding to that, often times these files contain critical business data that can be out of most administrators' and corporate officers' reach.

Archive Attender can move all content from PST files into a centralized archive location, while giving users of those PST files access to the archived messages through stubs, or placeholders, left in their mailboxes. Since all messages from the PST files can be centralized within the archives and users are provided a means to access, search and restore their archived messages, the use of PST files and creation of new ones should no longer be necessary.

In addition, Archive Attender's PST import utility provides a method through which PST Files can be automatically mapped to an Archive Attender user mailbox based on the contents of the messages within that PST file. This alleviates administrators from having to manually open and sift through each PST to determine ownership.

Provide Access to End Users

Another key feature of Archive Attender is its ability to provide users access to all messages archived from their mailboxes through Outlook without requiring any additional component installation on the user's local computer. Remote users can also access archived messages through Outlook Web Access (OWA), as well as in HTML format on hand-held devices and non-Windows computers.

Users can access their archives in two ways. The first is to define a policy to retain stubs when messages are archived from their mailboxes. A stub is a placeholder for the archived email and usually provides a way to view a copy of the original archived email left in the user's mailbox. The user can click on this link to quickly view a copy of the original message in either an Outlook message window or HTML web browser.

The second method is to allow users to search their own archives with a customized search interface, shown in Figure 3, which they access through the Outlook client. If users are given the appropriate privileges by the administrator, they can search, view, restore, and delete messages archived from their mailboxes.

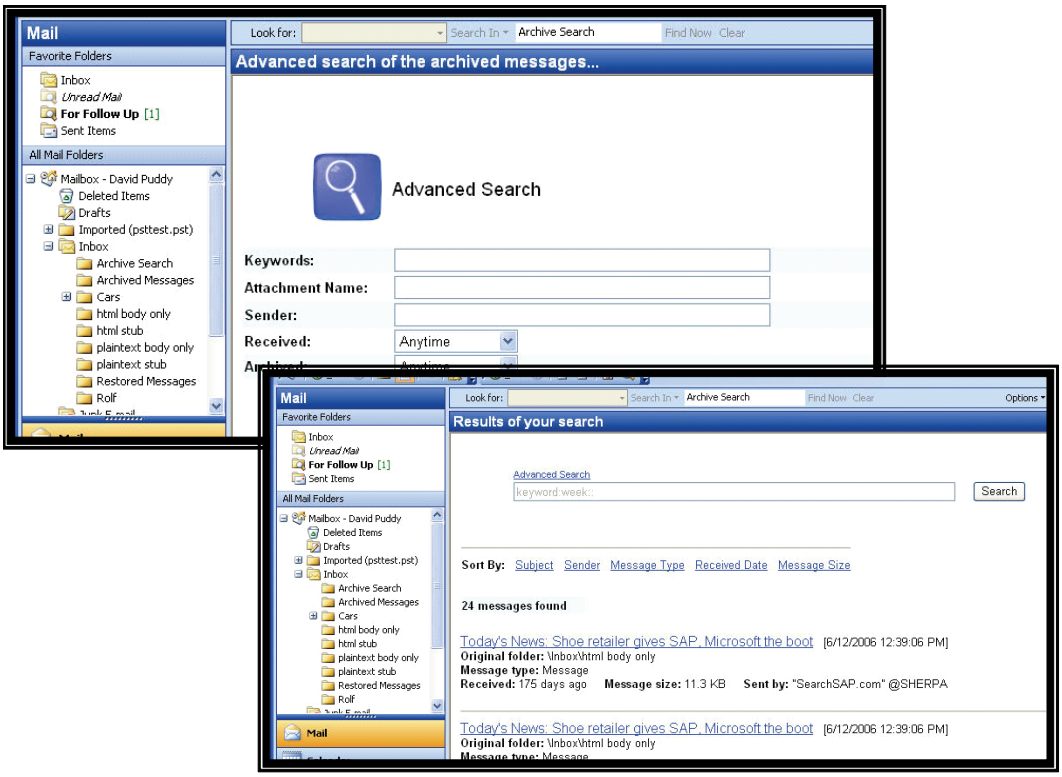

Figure 3 Archive Attender's User Interface to Search Archives

Archive Information Within Minutes of Installing Archive Attender

Archive Attender combines a robust feature set with a flexible, easy to use architecture. It offers a simplified, non-invasive architecture that, unlike many products, can be installed and configured in less than fifteen minutes.

Archive Attender does not require a SQL database, proprietary hardware or any components installed on the Exchange server or end-user computers. The combination of these features allows Archive Attender to operate at maximum efficiency and simplify the entire installation process so Administrators can begin securing information almost immediately after the product is installed.

Let Sherpa Software Guide You Through the Complex Archiving Landscape

For nearly 10 years, Sherpa Software has been providing award-winning software specifically designed to address archiving, e-discovery, storage, information security, PST administration and compliance requirements for Microsoft Exchange and Lotus Notes environments.

Sherpa Software is designed to streamline administrative processes while offering flexible management architectures and reasonable pricing models to any size company. Microsoft Exchange products include: Archive Attender® (mailbox, PST file, and public folder archiving), Mail Attender® (mailbox, PST file, and public folder management) and Discovery Attender® (electronic search and discovery).

You wouldn't try to tackle Mount Everest without the help of a Sherpa, so why try to tackle email archiving without Sherpa Software? For detailed product descriptions, free white papers, and evaluation versions of Sherpa Software products, visit www.sherpa-software.com or call 1-800-255-5155 to speak with a Sherpa Software Sales Representative.